HORROR
THE VAULT OF HORROR
10¢
FEATURING
THE VAULT KEEPER
THE CRYPT-KEEPER
THE OLD WITCH
WISHING WELL

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

WELL, WELL, WELL... THREE HOLES IN THE GROUND AND ALL THAT SORT OF ROT! I HAVE A *DILLY* OF A STORY FOR YOU THIS TIME, FRIENDS, FULL OF PASSION, GRIEF... AND *HATE!* HEH, HEH! SO RELAX FOR A WHILE... *IF YOU DARE*... AND READ THE TALE I CALL...

SINK-HOLE!

SIX MONTHS SHE REFLECTED. SIX LONG, WEARY MONTHS... THE LONGEST MOST MISERABLE MONTHS OF HER LIFE! SHE WAS LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW OF THE RAMSHACKLE FARM-HOUSE AT A CLOUD OF DUST FAR DOWN THE ROAD, AND SHE LET HER THOUGHTS DRIFT BACK... BACK TO THE BEGINNING...

TWO YEARS AGO SHE HAD JOINED A 'LONELY HEARTS PEN-PALS CLUB.' THAT WAS WHERE (BY MAIL) SHE HAD MET ALDOUS BARSTOW...

OH, HE SENT A PICTURE THIS TIME! HE'S NICE LOOKING! AND HIS LETTERS SOUND SO WARM... SO TENDER!

A YEAR OF CORRESPONDENCE HAD FOLLOWED. THE SPELL OF LONELINESS HAD BEEN BROKEN BY THE LETTERS FROM YOUNG, SYMPATHETIC ALDOUS.

HEAVENS! HE WANTS ME TO *MARRY* HIM AND LIVE ON HIS FARM... HIS BEAUTIFUL, COUNTRY *FARM!*

SHE HAD ACCEPTED HAPPILY, AND SEVERAL DAYS LATER HAD STEPPED FROM THE TRAIN FACE TO FACE WITH ALDOUS!

YOU'RE ALDOUS? BUT THE PICTURE YOU SENT... I MEAN, IN THE PICTURE YOU... YOU LOOK...

YOUNGER? WHY, SURE! THAT SNAPSHOT WAS TAKEN MORE'N *FIFTEEN YEARS AGO!* I WAS GOING TO HAVE A MORE RECENT ONE MADE, BUT THEY COST MONEY!

. OF COURSE...

IT HADN'T REALLY MATTERED TO HER THEN, SHE REMEMBERED. ALTHOUGH HE WAS NO LONGER YOUNG, SHE HAD STIFLED HER MISGIVINGS AS THEY BOUNCED ALONG THE DUSTY ROAD TO THE FARM.

THE 'BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY FARM' TURNED OUT TO BE A GROUP OF DILAPIDATED BUILDINGS SQUATTING ON THE PARCHED, SUNBAKED EARTH. IT WAS A TERRIFIC SHOCK TO HER. SHE COULD HARDLY STEP FROM THE FLIVVER...

IT WASN'T ONLY THE *LOOK* OF THE PLACE, IT WAS THE *FEEL* OF IT! SHE STARED DAZEDLY AT THE DINGY, CLAPBOARD FRAME OF HER NEW HOME AND SHUDDERED. IT FELT *EMPTY!* IT SEEMED LIKE A PLACE WHERE NO ONE LIVED!

ALDOUS! IT... IT'S. .LOVELY!

... PREACHER'S WAITING INSIDE! CEREMONY SHOULD NOT TAKE MORE'N A FEW MINUTES! YOU BRING THE BAGS!

AND SO THEY HAD BEEN MARRIED! SHE HAD SENSED IT WOULDN'T WORK OUT, AND HAD BEEN RIGHT! NOW, SIX MONTHS LATER, SHE WATCHED THE SMALL DUST CLOUD MOVE CLOSER...AND TRIED TO HOLD BACK HER TEARS...

...PROBABLY MR. FARNSWORTH, THE GOVERNMENT HEALTH INSPECTOR...

...OLD FUDDY-DUDDY FARNSWORTH! SHE DISLIKED THE PRYING OLD FOOL, BUT HE WAS SOMEONE TO TALK TO! AS THE CAR DREW NEARER, SHE SAW THAT IT *WASN'T* FARNSWORTH! SHE HURRIED OUTSIDE AS THE CAR PULLED INTO THE YARD...

'MORNING! I'M *RICK HUDSON*, THE NEW HEALTH INSPECTOR! I'M TAKING OVER MR. FARNSWORTH'S JOB! ARE YOU MRS. BARSTOW?

WHY...WHY, YES! I'M MRS. BARSTOW! I'M *VERY* GLAD TO MEET YOU, MR. HUDSON. COME! I'LL... I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND...

SHE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED! HER FACE FLUSHED... HER BODY TINGLED AT THE NEARNESS OF HIM AS HE CHECKED THE FARM'S SANITARY CONDITIONS...

I—I HOPE EVERYTHING IS ALL RIGHT, MR. HUDSON!

EVERYTHING'S FINE, MRS. BARSTOW!

SHE LIKED THIS MAN WHO HAD SUDDENLY ENLIVENED HER DRAB LIFE. SHE LIKED HIM MORE THAN WAS GOOD FOR A MARRIED GIRL...

WOULDN'T YOU RATHER CALL ME...*SHIRLEY?*

I GUESS SO! YOU CAN CALL ME RICK!

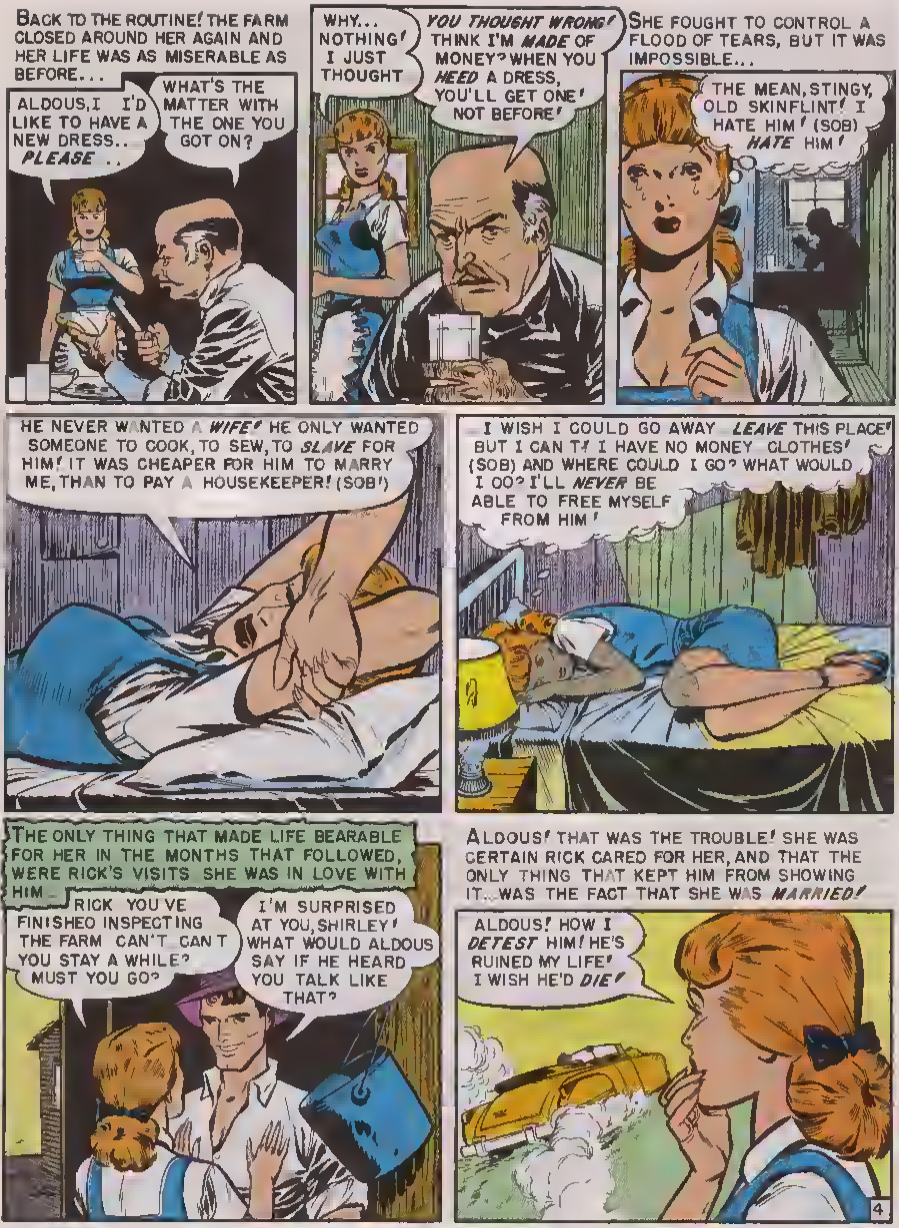
FINALLY HE HAD TO LEAVE, AND SHE FOUND HERSELF TRYING DESPERATELY TO KEEP HIM FROM GOING...

. BUT WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO HAVE SOME COFFEE? I...

MAYBE NEXT TIME, SHIRLEY! SO LONG!

SHE STOOD THERE LONG AFTER THE CAR HAD DISAPPEARED... UNTIL THE NOISY SPUTTERINGS OF ALDOUS' TRACTOR BURST HER THOUGHTS LIKE A PIN TOUCHED TO A BALLOON...

HEAVENS! ALDOUS WILL WANT HIS LUNCH! I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS SO LATE!


BACK TO THE ROUTINE! THE FARM CLOSED AROUND HER AGAIN AND HER LIFE WAS AS MISERABLE AS BEFORE...
ALDOUS, I I'D LIKE TO HAVE A NEW DRESS.. PLEASE ..
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE ONE YOU GOT ON?
WHY... NOTHING! I JUST THOUGHT
YOU THOUGHT WRONG! THINK I'M MADE OF MONEY? WHEN YOU NEED A DRESS, YOU'LL GET ONE! NOT BEFORE!
SHE FOUGHT TO CONTROL A FLOOD OF TEARS, BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE...
THE MEAN, STINGY, OLD SKINFLINT! I HATE HIM! (SOB) HATE HIM!
HE NEVER WANTED A WIFE! HE ONLY WANTED SOMEONE TO COOK, TO SEW, TO SLAVE FOR HIM! IT WAS CHEAPER FOR HIM TO MARRY ME, THAN TO PAY A HOUSEKEEPER! (SOB!)
I WISH I COULD GO AWAY... LEAVE THIS PLACE! BUT I CAN T! I HAVE NO MONEY CLOTHES! (SOB) AND WHERE COULD I GO? WHAT WOULD I DO? I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO FREE MYSELF FROM HIM!
THE ONLY THING THAT MADE LIFE BEARABLE FOR HER IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, WERE RICK'S VISITS SHE WAS IN LOVE WITH HIM...
RICK YOU'VE FINISHED INSPECTING THE FARM CAN'T CAN T YOU STAY A WHILE? MUST YOU GO?
I'M SURPRISED AT YOU, SHIRLEY! WHAT WOULD ALDOUS SAY IF HE HEARD YOU TALK LIKE THAT?
ALDOUS! THAT WAS THE TROUBLE! SHE WAS CERTAIN RICK CARED FOR HER, AND THAT THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT HIM FROM SHOWING IT... WAS THE FACT THAT SHE WAS MARRIED!
ALDOUS! HOW I DETEST HIM! HE'S RUINED MY LIFE! I WISH HE'D DIE!
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AT THAT MOMENT ALDOUS CAME IN FROM THE FIELDS...

...NEARLY GOT MYSELF *KILLED!* THOSE DANGED *SINK HOLES!*

? SINK HOLES? WHAT'S A *SINK HOLE?*

THEY'RE CAUSED BY UNDERGROUND RIVERS! THE RIVER KEEPS EATIN' AWAY THE SOIL UNTIL THE TOP GROUND JUST CAVES IN!

OH!

...I WAS DRIVIN' THE TRACTOR CROSS THE FIELD TO THE HOUSE WHEN THE GROUND JUST OPENED UP NOT TEN FEET IN FRONT OF ME! STOPPED JUST IN TIME!

OH..

DANGED SINK HOLES! *PRACTICALLY BOTTOMLESS!* IF I'D FALLEN IN THERE, YOU'D *NEVER* HAVE FOUND ME!

OH?

THE ENTIRE PLAN STRUCK HER WITH SHOCKING FORCE! HERE WAS HER ONE AND ONLY CHANCE FOR FREEDOM... FOR HAPPINESS! AND SHE WAS IN NO MOOD TO LET IT SLIP BY...

KLANG!

SHE DRAGGED THE UNCONSCIOUS ALDOUS FROM THE HOUSE... AND WITH GREAT EFFORT, LIFTED HIM ONTO THE TRACTOR. OVERHEAD, THE DARK SKY RUMBLED OMINOUSLY AS IF IN REPROACH...

HAVE TO HURRY! HE... HE'LL WAKE UP SOON! (GASP!)

INTERCONTINENTAL DIESEL

SILENTLY, SHE THANKED ALDOUS FOR HAVING MADE HER LEARN TO WORK THE TRACTOR! NOW, WHEN HER FUTURE... HER LIFE... DEPENDED ON IT, SHE WAS ABLE TO SEND THE MACHINE LURCHING ACROSS THE FIELDS...

DROPLETS OF RAIN PLUNGED FROM THE SKY INTO THE EARTH! THE WIND ROSE, WHIPPING HER HAIR! SHE REACHED THE SINK HOLE...

...IT'S BIG! *BIG!* PLENTY BIG ENOUGH FOR THE TRACTOR, TOO!

SHE RACED BACK TO THE TRACTOR AND PROPPED ALDOUS IN ITS SEAT! FRANTICALLY, SHE HEADED THE TRACTOR TOWARD THE GAPING HOLE, WAITED... *AND THEN LEAPED CLEAR!*

SPRAWLED ON THE GROUND, SHE WATCHED SPELLBOUND AS THE TRACTOR TEETERED ON THE EDGE OF THE PIT.. AND THEN TOPPLED INTO OBLIVION...

THERE WAS AN INVESTIGATION BUT IT DISCLOSED NOTHING...

YOU'LL NEVER FIND A BODY DOWN *THERE!* PROBABLY CARRIED AWAY BY THAT UNDERGROUND RIVER! NO SIGN OF THE TRACTOR, EITHER!

...AND THEN THERE WAS THE INQUEST...

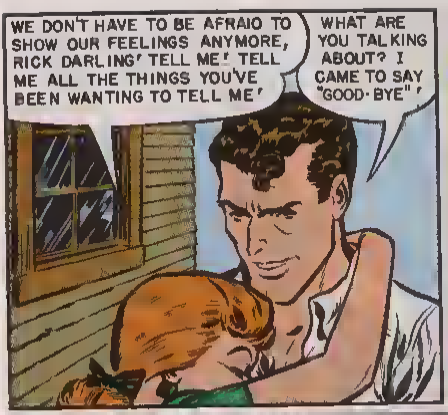
...BECAUSE THE BODY OF THE DECEASED HAS NOT BEEN FOUND, THE VERDICT IS 'DEATH BY ACCIDENT, DUE TO THE CAUSES OF NATURE!'

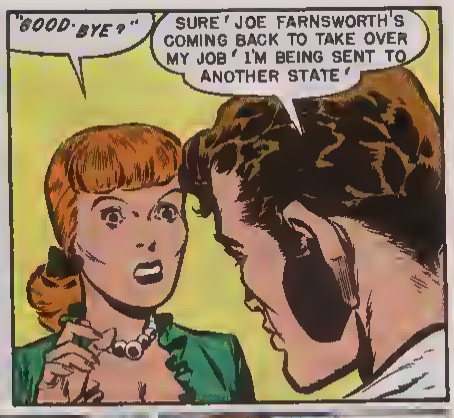
...AND THEN SHE WAS FREE! SHE KNEW RICK WOULD SOON COME TO HER, AND SHE STROLLED ABOUT THE FARM WHILE SHE WAITED. IT WAS THE SAME UGLY, EMPTY-FEELING FARM STILL THE PLACE WHERE, IT SEEMED, NO ONE LIVED!

RICK CAME... AND SHIRLEY RAN HAPPILY TO HIM...

I... I HEARD ABOUT ALDOUS, SHIRLEY! I'M SORRY!

DON'T BE SORRY, RICK, BE *GLAD!* HE WAS MEAN. *CRUEL!* HE STOOD BETWEEN US, BUT NOW WE'RE FREE, RICK! *FREE!*

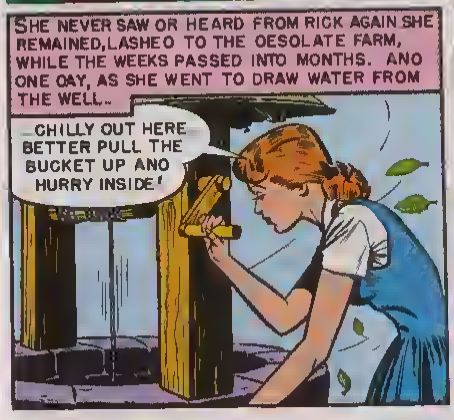

WE DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID TO SHOW OUR FEELINGS ANYMORE, RICK DARLING! TELL ME! TELL ME ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO TELL ME!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I CAME TO SAY "GOOD-BYE"!

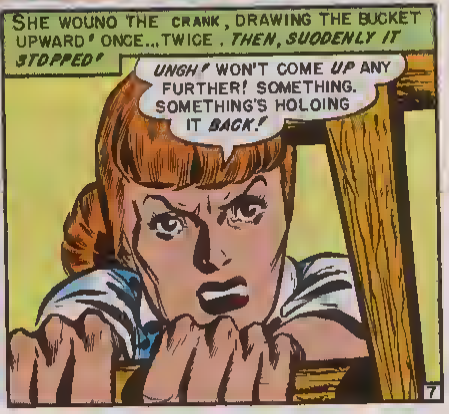

"GOOD-BYE?"
SURE! JOE FARNSWORTH'S COMING BACK TO TAKE OVER MY JOB! I'M BEING SENT TO ANOTHER STATE!

ANOTHER STATE?! YOU'LL... YOU'LL TAKE ME WITH YOU, WON'T YOU, RICK? FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, DON'T LEAVE ME HERE! SAY YOU'LL TAKE ME WITH YOU!
ARE YOU KIDDING?

LOOK, SHIRLEY... YOU'RE A NICE KID, BUT I CAN'T TAKE YOU WITH ME! I'VE BEEN HAPPILY MARRIED FOR YEARS! I GOT A WIFE AND TWO KIDS!
RICK!

RICK...


SHE NEVER SAW OR HEARD FROM RICK AGAIN. SHE REMAINED, LASHED TO THE DESOLATE FARM, WHILE THE WEEKS PASSED INTO MONTHS. AND ONE DAY, AS SHE WENT TO DRAW WATER FROM THE WELL...
...CHILLY OUT HERE BETTER PULL THE BUCKET UP AND HURRY INSIDE!


SHE WOUND THE CRANK, DRAWING THE BUCKET UPWARD ONCE... TWICE. THEN, SUDDENLY IT STOPPED!
UNGH! WON'T COME UP ANY FURTHER! SOMETHING. SOMETHING'S HOLDING IT BACK!

SHE PITTED ALL HER STRENGTH TO THE TASK OF RAISING THE BUCKET, BUT IT WAS NO USE! THE HANDLE WAS WRENCHED FROM HER GRIP!

THE BUCKET'S GOING *DOWN!* SOMETHING'S PULLING IT BACK *DOWN!*

THE ROPE UNCOILED TO ITS FULL LENGTH, AND THEN IT SNAPPED TAUT! IT SWAYED AND JERKED

IT'S ...IT'S AS IF SOMETHING... IS *CLIMBING UP!*

ROOTED TO THE SPOT, SHE STARED IN HORROR AS FIRST ONE HAND SLID OVER THE WELL'S WALL ..AND THEN ANOTHER...

ALDOUS!

SHE WAS PETRIFIED! THE INCREDULOUSLY HORRIBLE THING GRASPED HER ARM WITH A SLIMY, MOLTED [illegible] AND PULLED HER CLOSE TO ITS SOAKING BODY! SHE FOUGHT HYSTERICALLY... BUT THE SLOPPING, MAGGOT-COVERED LIMBS LOCKED HER IN A DEATH GRIP...AND DRAGGED HER INTO THE DEPTHS!

THE HOLLOW ECHOES OF HER SCREAMS CEASED ABRUPTLY, AND A CLOAK OF UTTER SILENCE SEEMED TO SETTLE OVER THE EMPTY FARM! NOW IT TRULY WAS...A PLACE WHERE NO ONE LIVED!

-THE END-

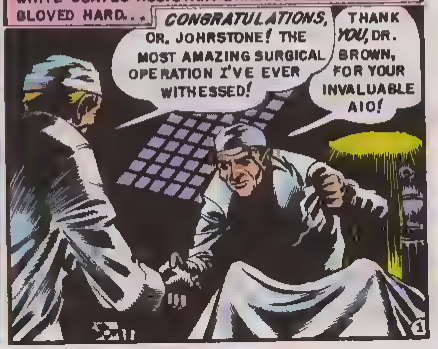
HEH! HEH! HEH! *WELL*-OONE! *WELL*-DONE! IF SHIRLEY HADN'T GONE TO THE WELL, SHE MIGHT NOT HAVE *KICKED THE BUCKET!* OF COURSE, YOU REALIZE NOW THAT THE UNDERGROUND RIVER FROM THE SINK HOLE WAS THE WATER THAT FED THE WELL! HEH! I'LL BET ALDOUS EXPERIENCED A *SINKING* FEELING WHEN HE WENT TO HIS DEATH! OH, WELL... AS THE SAYING GOES," HOW YA GONNA KEEP 'EM DOWN ON THE FARM AFTER THEY'VE SEEN DEAD ALDOUS?" *HEH! HEH! HEH!*

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

H-M-M-PH! IS THAT *CHILD'S FAIRY TALE* THE *VAULT-KEEPER* JUST TOLD YOU SUPPOSED TO BE A *HORROR* STORY? *BAH!* I'LL BET YOU DIDN'T BAT AR EYELASH! NOW, IT'S *MY* TURN! YES, IT'S *ME* AGAIN! THE *CRYPT-KEEPER!* I'VE LOOKED THROUGH MY COLLECTION OF TERROR-TALES HERE IR MY CRYPT, AND I'VE COME UP WITH A HUM-DINGER! THIS YARR WILL ABSOLUTELY SEND CHILLS AND SHIVERS FROM THE TIPS OF YOUR CROOKED TOES TO THE ENDS OP THE HAIRS OR YOUR UNKEMPT HEAD! IF THE BLOOD DOESN'T FREEZE IN YOUR VEINS FROM *THIS* SPINE-TINGLER, THEN YOU'RE SITTING OR RED-HOT BRIMSTONE! I CALL THIS CRAWLY NARRATIVE...

LEND ME A HAND!

IT BEGAN IR THE CLEAN, WHITE OPERATING ROOM OF THE COURTY HOSPITAL! DOCTOR HAROLD JOHNSTONE, HIS BROW WET WITH PERSPIRATION, STEPPED BACK FROM THE SHEETED, PROSTRATE FORM OR THE OPERATING TABLE ARD REMOVED HIS MASK! HIS WHITE-COATED ASSISTANT GRASPED HIS RUBBER-GLOVED HARD...



DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TURNED, AND WITH HEAVY STEPS, MOVED THROUGH THE SWINGING DOORS OUT OF THE OPERATING ROOM! THE SMALL GROUP OF NURSES AND DOCTORS WATCHED HIM GO. . .

HE IS DEFINITELY THE GREATEST SURGEON ALIVE TODAY!

A *GENIUS!* TWO YEARS AGO, THIS OPERATION WAS CONSIDERED *IMPOSSIBLE!*

DOCTOR JOHNSTONE ENTERED ANOTHER WHITE, SPARKLING ROOM! THIS ONE WAS LINED WITH SINKS AND LOCKERS! HE REMOVED HIS GLOVES AND WASHED. . . THEN,

TIRED. . . SO TIRED! FOUR HOURS AT THE OPERATING TABLE! I'M *EXHAUSTED!*

DOWN THE IMPOSING MARBLE STEPS OF THE HUGE HOSPITAL TO A CAR PARKED AT THE CURB, DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TRUDGED WEARILY. . .

. . . GOT TO GET SOME SLEEP! TOO MUCH FOR ME. . . NIGHT AFTER NIGHT. . .

THE HEADLIGHTS OF THE HURTLING AUTOMOBILE REACHED INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE ROAD BEFORE IT LIKE TWO GHOSTLY FINGERS POINTING INTO ETERNITY. . .

DR. JOHNSTONE SAT BEHIND THE WHEEL! HIS EYELIDS WERE HEAVY WITH LACK OF SLEEP! FOR A MOMENT, THEY BLINKED CLOSED! ONE FLEETING MOMENT. . . YET LONG ENOUGH FOR THE DOCTOR TO MISS THE TURN IN THE ROAD. . .

THE STILLNESS OF THE DESERTED ROAD WAS SHATTERED BY THE IMPACT OF TWO TONS OF METAL, GLASS, AND HUMAN FLESH! THEN THE DARKNESS CLOSED IN ON THE WRECKAGE OF A ONCE SLEEK AUTOMOBILE! THE DOCTOR LAY UNCONSCIOUS, HIS RIGHT HAND PINNED BENEATH THE SEVEN-HUNDRED POUND RED-HOT ENGINE. . .

WHEN DOCTOR JOHNSTONE OPENED HIS EYES, HE GAZED AT A FAMILIAR SIGHT. . . THE SPARKLING WHITE WALLS OF A HOSPITAL ROOM! HE LOOKED ABOUT! HIS HEAD CLEARED. . .

I REMEMBER, NOW! THE CRASH! I MUST HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL! MY HAND . . IT *PAINS* SO. . .

RING FOR THE NURSE IF YOU WANT SOMETHING! HE HAD OFTEN TOLD HIS PATIENTS! HE LOOKED FOR THE SWITCH! IT LAY ABOVE HIS HEAD! HE'D HAVE TO REACH FOR IT WITH HIS RIGHT HAND... THE HAND THAT PAINED HIM SO...

JUST... A... LITTLE... HIGHER... AND I... OH... WHA... NO... NO... NO! YAAAAAAAHH!

THE BANDAGES COVERED HIS FOREARM FROM HIS ELBOW DOWN! BUT THE HAND... *THE HAND WAS GONE...*

OH, LORD... LORD... WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO ME?

THEY QUIETED DOCTOR JOHNSTONE! THEY TOLD HIM THAT HIS HAND HAD BEEN MANGLED AND BURNED! THAT WHEN THEY BROUGHT HIM TO THE HOSPITAL, AMPUTATION WAS THE ONLY RECOURSE! THEY GAVE HIM SEDATIVES... TO MAKE HIM SLEEP...

I OON'T *WANT* TO BLEEP! I OON'T WANT TO *LIVE* ANYMORE!

THE DAYS WENT BY, AND THE DOCTOR BECAME SULLEN AND MOROSE! HE BROODED... SPOKE TO NO ONE...

IT'S UNOERSTANOABLE! HIS CAREER IS *FINISHED!*

AND HE WAS SUCH A *BRILLIANT* SURGEON!

...AND THEN THEY LET HIM GO HOME! THERE WAS NOTHING MORE TO BE DONE FOR HIM! THE WRIST WOULD HEAL! BUT THE *MIND*... AH, THE MIND WAS A *DIFFERENT* MATTER! HEH, HEH! HOW WOULD *YOU* FEEL IF YOU WERE IN DOCTOR JOHNSTONE'S SHOES, EH?

THEN, ONE OAY, ABOUT THREE MONTHS AFTER THE ACCIOENT, OOCTOR JOHNSTONE WAS NEAOING A MEOICAL JOURNAL... SOMETHING ABOUT KEEPING TISSUE ALIVE BY CHEMICAL AND MECHANICAL APPARATUS... WHEN IT CAME TO HIM! AN ANSWER! A WAY OUT

WHY, NOT? IF THEY OIO IT WITH CHICKEN HEARTS AND OOGS' HEADS, I COULD OO IT WITH A HANO!

IT WAS SIMPLE! HE'O GET A *HANO* SOMEWHERE... SOMEHOW! HE'O KEEP IT ALIVE UNTIL HE COULO SUCCESSFULLY GRAFT IT TO HIS WRIST STUMP...

IT WOULO BE SO EASY! I'M SURE I COULO WORK OUT A METHOO OF OOING IT! BUT I'O HAVE TO OO IT MYSELF... KEEP IT A SECRET... BECAUSE I'LL NEEO A HANO FROM A *A FRESHLY-KILLED CORPSE!*

THE EQUIPMENT WAS ASSEMBLED! PLASMA... AIR PUMPS... GLUCOSE FOR CELL NUTRITION... PLASTIC TUBING TO ACT AS VEINS AND ARTERIES... EVERYTHING WAS READY! EVERYTHING EXCEPT. .

A *BODY!* NOW, I MUST GET A *FRESH BODY!*

FOR MANY NIGHTS, IF ANYONE TOOK THE CARE TO NOTICE, THE DOCTOR WAS SEEN FREQUENTING BARS, BACK ALLEYS, SKID ROW... LOOKING.. LOOKING...

SHAY... MISHTER! KIN YA SHPARE A DIME?

HUH?

AT LAST DOCTOR JOHNSTONE HAD FOUND HIS VICTIM! A DOWN-AND-OUTER! A CHRONIC ALCOHOLIC WITH NO FAMILY... NO FRIENDS... NO ONE TO MISS HIM IF HE... *DISAPPEARED!*

I DON' KNOW WHY I'M TELLIN' YUH ALL THISH, MISHTER! BUY ME 'NOTHER DRINK, HUH?

SURE! SURE! OH, BARTENDER!

CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, TWO SHADOWY FIGURES STAGGERED FROM A BAR! THEN, ONE COLLAPSED AND THE OTHER CARRIED HIM TO A WAITING CAR...

CRIPES! HE'S A *TANK!* I THOUGHT HE'D *NEVER PASS OUT!*

ONCE AT HIS HOME, THE DOCTOR CARRIED THE LIMP FORM OF HIS VICTIM DIRECTLY TO HIS LABORATORY! THE LIGHTS IN THE APPARATUS-CLUTTERED ROOM BURNED FAR INTO THE NIGHT! TOWARDS MORNING...

... GOT TO GET RID OF THE BODY!

...THE SOUND OF A SPADE STRIKING THE SOFT EARTH WAS HEARD! IT ECHOED ABOUT THE DOCTOR'S GARDEN ... RESOUNDING FROM TREE TO TREE...

I'LL BURY HIM *HERE*, IN MY *GARDEN!* HE'LL *NEVER* BE MISSED... BUT IF HE *IS*... THEY'Y HARDLY LOOK FOR HIM *HERE!*

SOON THE HOLE WAS DEEP AND DARK! THE DOCTOR PUSHED THE BODY OF THE UNFORTUNATE DERELICT INTO THE YAWNING PIT AND FILLED IT UP WITH THE BLACK EARTH...

THANKS, FRIEND! THANKS FOR THE *HAND*. . HA-HA-HA!

THE WORK IN THE GARDEN COMPLETED, THE DOCTOR RETURNED TO HIS LABORATORY. THE MONOTONOUS THROBBING OF AN AIR PUMP, THE GURGLING OF PLASMA COURSING THROUGH TUBING, THE STEADY DRIP, DRIP OF BLOOD WERE HEARD. DOCTOR JOHNSTONE STARED AT THE HAND LYING ON THE WHITE MARBLE SLAB...
IT... IT'S TURNING BLUE! IS IT... DEAD?
HORROR CLUTCHED AT THE DOCTOR'S POUNDING HEART. THE HAND LAY ON THE TABLE. THE TUBES ATTACHED TO ITS VEINS AND ARTERIES PULSATING WITH EACH STROKE OF THE PUMP...
I'VE GOT TO TEST IT! TO SEE IF IT'S STILL ALIVE!
DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TOUCHED A WIRE TO A NERVE ENDING AT THE STUMP OF THE WRIST. A SMALL CHARGE OF ELECTRICITY SHOT FROM IT! THE HAND QUIVERED... A FINGER BENT UPWARD...
IT IS! IT IS! THANK HEAVENS!
THEN THE DOCTOR BEGAN TO UNWRAP THE BANDAGES FROM HIS RIGHT ARM...
I ONLY HOPE... I DON'T LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS DURING THE OPERATION!
THE CLOCK ON THE LABORATORY WALL TICKED ON AND ON. AND THEN, THREE HOURS LATER...
FINISHED! NOW, I MUST GIVE IT TIME... TIME FOR THE NERVE ENDINGS TO KNIT TOGETHER, THE JOINT-CARTILAGE TO REFORM, THE VEINS TO MEND, AND THE CONNECTING PLASTIC TUBING TO DISSOLVE...
THE WEEKS WENT BY. DOCTOR JOHNSTONE REMAINED INDOORS... HIS ARM IN A CAST. FINALLY THE FATEFUL DAY CAME WHEN THE CAST WAS REMOVED...
I... I'VE FAILED! I CAN'T MOVE THE FINGERS!
SOMETHING WAS WRONG! SOMETHING HAD BEEN OVERLOOKED! THE HAND WAS NUMB. THERE WAS NO FEELING! THE DOCTOR TOOK A PIN AND JABBED IT! THERE WAS NO PAIN...
DEAD! IT'S. DEAD!
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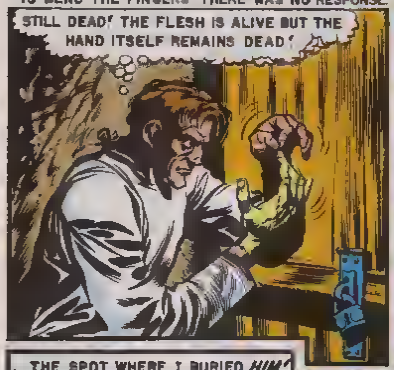
THE DOCTOR HURLED HIMSELF UPON THE BED AND FELL INTO AN EXHAUSTED SLEEP! THE DAY DARKENED AND NIGHT CAME ON! THE DEAD HAND LAY AT HIS SIDE, ATTACHED TO HIS ARM... LIFELESS... STILL! THEN... A FINGER MOVED! IT TWITCHED... BENT...

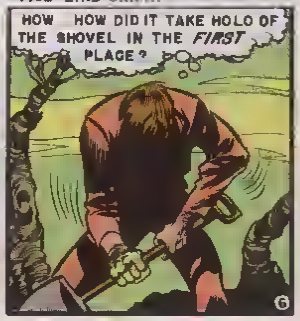
WHEN THE DOCTOR WOKE UP, HE FOUND HIMSELF TEARING AT THE LOCK TO THE TOOLROOM, TRYING TO OPEN THE DOOR...

HE LIFTED THE HAND—STARING AT IT! HE TRIED TO BEND THE FINGERS! THERE WAS NO RESPONSE.



THE NEXT NIGHT, THE DOCTOR WENT TO BED AT HIS USUAL TIME! DURING THE DAY HE HAD BEEN ALMOST TEMPTED TO REMOVE THE LIFELESS HAND FROM HIS ARM, BUT HAD DECIDED TO WAIT, TO SEE! HIS SLEEP WAS TROUBLED! HE DREAMED OF WALKING IN BLACKNESS... CARRYING A STICK! HE WAS AWAKENED SUDDENLY BY...

DOCTOR JOHNSTONE TRIED TO WRENCH THE SHOVEL FROM THE DEAD LIMB! BUT IT HELD IT IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP...



THE AMAZED DOCTOR FINALLY REMOVED THE SHOVEL FROM THE HAND, LOCKED IT IN THE TOOLROOM, AND RETURNED TO THE HOUSE! THERE WAS NO SLEEP FOR HIM THE REST OF THAT NIGHT! HE WAS SURE NOW THE OPERATION WAS A SUCCESS AND THAT THE HAND LIVED MOVED WAS CONTROLLABLE ..

IN MY SLEEP, MY SUBCONSCIOUS CAN CONTROL IT! BUT NOW... I CANNOT MAKE IT MOVE..

THE FOLLOWING EVENING, AFTER AN EXHAUSTING DAY OF TREATING THE HAND WITH DIATHERMY TO RELAX THE MUSCLES, THE DOCTOR RETIRED EARLY! HE IMMEDIATELY DROPPED OFF INTO A NIGHTMARE OF CLAWING AT CLOSED DOORS.. AND DIGGING. *DIGGING!* SUDDENLY, HE OPENED HIS EYES...

GOOD LORD! I AM DIGGING!

DOCTOR JOHNSTONE STARED DOWN INTO THE BLACK HOLE BEFORE HIM! THERE, IN THE SLIMY WET SOIL, HE SAW IT...

I....I'VE DUG UP THAT DRUNK I MURDERED!

AN EXCRUCIATING PAIN WHIPPED THROUGH JOHNSTONE'S RIGHT ARM! THE HAND .. THE DEAD HAND

IT.. IT'S TEARING ITSELF LOOSE!

AN EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK SHATTERED THE STILLNESS OF DOCTOR JOHNSTONE'S GARDEN! THE GULPING, WRETCHING, GAGGING GROANS OF A MAN BEING CHOKED TO DEATH WERE HEARD...

YAAAH!

THEY FOUND THE DOCTOR LYING BY THE PIT! HE WAS DEAD! BLOOD TRICKLED FROM HIS RAW WRIST-STUMP! AND DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT...

.. A CORPSE! AND IT'S RIGHT HAND IS SEVERED .. BUT IN *PLACE!*

CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! THE DOC'S HAND WAS AMPUTATED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO - BUT *THIS* WOUND IS *FRESH!* LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN CHOKED TO DEATH, TOO! I .. I WONDER!

HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S MY TALE FROM THE *CRYPT* FOR THIS ISSUE, KIDDIES! LOOKS LIKE THE OLD DRUNK'S *HAND* RESENTED BEING SEPARATED FROM ITS *BODY*, EH? IT CAME *BACK*, THOUGH, IN A *GRIPPING FINISH*.. DOCTOR *JOHNSTONE'S FINISH*. THAT IS! WELL, I HOPE THIS STORY *HANDED* YOU A FEW *CHILLS!* NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE *VAULT-KEEPER* FOR ANOTHER *SISSY-STORY!*

I CALL THIS CHILLING TALE...

THE MASK OF HORROR

HE CAME FROM BEHIND A FADED CURTAIN...SMALL... WRINKLED...AN OLD MAN, BENT FROM THE SHRINKING OF A ONCE YOUNG BODY! HE SHUFFLED TOWARDS KEN
YES? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I...I'D LIKE TO BUY A COSTUME... FOR A MASQUERADE PARTY! SOMETHING...UNIQUE!
KEN GESTICULATED TOWARD THE WINDOW WHERE THE MASKS HUNG GRINNING EAGERLY AT AN EMPTY DARK DESERTED STREET...
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE MASK YOU ARE WEARING?
PERHAPS, A MASK...?
HUH?
EVERYONE WEARS A MASK! IT HIDES THE EVIL... THE GOOD... THE HATE...THE LOVE ...THAT LIES BENEATH!
YEAH, SURE! ORLY...
BUT HERE...AH... HERE IN MY SHOP, THINGS ARE DIFFERENT. MY MASKS ARE REAL! THEY REFLECT THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS WHO WEAR THEM...
THEY... THEY WHAT?
ONE OF MY MASKS REPRESENT MORE TRULY THE PERSON THAT IS BENEATH THE FACE IT COVERS!
YES! I SEE! VERY INTERESTING! NOW, ABOUT THIS MASQUERADE PARTY...
HERE! TAKE THIS BOX! IT HAS A COSTUME AND A MASK INSIDE! A MASK THAT ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE YOU...THE REAL YOU!
KEN ARDERS LEFT THE SHOP, THE PACKAGE UNDER HIS ARM! HE MOVED DOWN THE DARK TWISTING STREET! A GIRL PASSED HIM.. STOPPED BEFORE THE COSTUME SHOP. THEN ENTERED...
CRAZY OLD GUY! OH, WELL! AT LEAST I HAVE A COSTUME FOR THE MASQUERADE TONIGHT AT A PRICE I COULD AFFORD!

ONCE BACK AT HIS ROOM, KEN SHOWERED AND SHAVED! THEN HE CUT THE STRING THAT SECURED THE BOX, OPENED IT...
NOW LET'S SEE WHAT KIND OF A COSTUME THE OLD GUY DAVE ME ANYWAY.. WHA...?
KEN STEPPED BACK HORRIFIED! THE ROTTING FACE OF A DEDOMPOSING CORPSE, ALMOST SKULL-LIKE, LEERED UP AT HIM..
GOOD LORD! THE OLD GUY WAS NUTS! THAT HOG-WASH ABOUT REAL CHARACTER.. HMM-M PH! BIG JOKE!
WHAT A REVOLTING COSTUME! WELL...I MIGHT AS WELL WEAR IT! IT'S TOO LATE TO TAKE IT BACK, NOW!
KEN DRESSED IN THE MOLDY ROTTED CLOTHES OF THE COSTUME AND PUT THE MASK BACK INTO THE BOX! THEN HE LEFT! HE TOOK A TAXI CROSS-TOWN TO HIS FIANCÉE'S HOUSE...
AGNES! YOU'RE NOT DRESSED!
I'M NOT DOING, KEN! I'VE A TERRIBLE HEADACHE! YOU GO ON ALONE! I WOULDN'T WANT TO SPOIL YOUR EVENING!
NONSENSE! I'LL STAY HERE WITH YOU THIS EVE...
NO! I... I... I'D RATHER BE ALONE, KEN PLEASE.
KEN LEFT! THE PARTY WOULDN'T BE MUCH FUN WITHOUT AGNES! DEAREST AGNES! SOMEDAY SHE WOULD BE KEN'S WIFE! AND THEY'D GROW OLD TOGETHER... AND THE MASK..
I LEFT MY MASK AT AGNES' HOUSE! I'LL HAVE TO GO BACK AND GET IT!
KEN TURNED AROUND! A CAR PULLED UP BEFORE AGNES' HOUSE! A MAN GOT OUT AND WENT INSIDE! KEN MOVED TOWARD THE DOOR, OPENED IT
DID YOU GET RID OF HIM, HONEY?
YES, THE SAP! I SENT HIM ON WITH ME! TOLD HIM I HAD A HEADACHE! HE WON'T BOTHER US AGAIN TONIGHT! NOW ... KISS ME!
3

KEN PICKED UP HIS PACKAGE AND CLOSED THE DOOR! AGNES... AGNES AND ANOTHER MAN...

HOW...HOW COULD SHE DO THIS TO ME! I... I THOUGHT SHE LOVED ME!

KEN WALKED IN A DAZE! HE KEPT SEEING THEM... TOGETHER... KISSING... EMBRACING... AND LAUGHING... LAUGHING AT HIM...

WE...WE WERE ENGAGED! I... I FEEL LIKE A FOOL!

AND THEN HE FOUND HIMSELF STANDING BEFORE A DOOR! FROM WITHIN, THE SOUND OF MUSIC AND REVELRY DRIFTED ONTO THE DARK STREET! HE UNTIED THE BOX AND SLIPPED ON THE MASK! THE DOOR OPENED.

GOOD LORD! OH..YOU GAVE ME A START! WHAT A ..A SCARY MASK!

KEN MOVED AS THOUGH IN A DREAM! PEOPLE IN VARIED COSTUMES. LAUGHING TALKING.. DANCING DRINKING... ALL GREW SILENT AS THEY CAUGHT SIGHT OF HIM! BUT HE DIDN'T CARE! HE FELT LIKE HIS MASK. DEAD . HIS LIFE ENDED! THE OLD MAN FURNY THE OLD MAN WAS ALMOST RIGHT

SHAY! G'MERE MISHTER CORPSH! I GOT JUSHT THE GIRL FOR YOU! C'MON, C'MON, HIC.

SUT, I

THE DRUNKER PIRATE PULLED HIM TO A FAR CORNER OF THE ROOM WHERE A SHAPELY GIRL, HER FACE COVERED BY THE MASK OF AN EVIL VAMPIRE, SAT DEMURELY

MISH VAMPIRE! LOOKA WHAT I GOT FOR YOU!

THE GIRL LOOKED UP! THE DRUNKEN PIRATE RAMBLED ON

MISHTER CORPSH! MEET MISH VAMPIRE! I'M SHURE YOU TWO WILL BE SHO HAPPY TOGETHER..

HE STAGGERED AWAY! THERE WAS A MOMENT OF EMBARRASSING SILENCE AND THEN..

IF YOU CAN...STAND IT SHALL WE DANCE?

YES! I'D LOVE TO!

KEN TODK HER IN HIS ARMS! HER WARM LOVELINESS WAS COMFORTING TO HIM! TONIGHT..TONIGHT HE WOULD HAVE *FUN!* FORGET AGNES! OVER... *DONE WITH...*

I...I'M SORRY ASOUT TNE MASK! I...I SOUSHT IT SIGHT UNSEEN!

SO DID I

THE GIRL! THE GIRL IN THAT DARK TWISTING STREET THAT WENT INTO THE SHOP...AFTER HE CAME OUT..

AT A LITTLE PLACE DOWNTOWN... A COSTUME SHOP...WITH A QUEER OLD PROPRIETOR!

YES! IS THAT WHERE YDU SDUSHT TOURS?

TNE MUSIC.. THE LAUGHING - AND THE GIRL IN HIS ARMS.. WARM.. LOVELY...TALKING TO HIM! MAKING HIM FORGET...FORGET...

DID HE TELL YOU ABOUT HIS MASKS, TOO? THAT THEY TRULY REPRESENTED THE WEARER!

YEAH! CRAZY OLD COOT! IT WAS A DIRTY TRICK!

I WAS ANGRY AT HIM, UNTIL *NOW!*

I...I DON'T GET IT!

WELL IF IT WEREN'T FOR THESE MASKS...THESE HORRID MASKS HE GAVE EACH OF US, WE NEVER WOULD HAVE MET!

THAT.. THAT'S RIGHT!

THEY LAUDHED! SNE WAS SWEET! NDT HARD AND COLD LIKE AGNES! SHE WAS SOFT...SENTLE...

I'LL SET UNDER THAT EVIL VAMPIRE MASK, THERE'S A FACE AS LOVELY AND AS CHARMING AS THE VOIGE I HEAR AND THE SODY I SEE...

THE SAME TO YOU...MISTER... CORPSN!

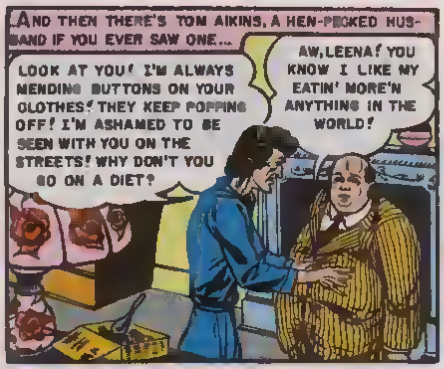
THE EVENING WENT SY, AND KEN AND HIS MYSTERIOUS MASKED PARTNER DANCED ON.. AND LAUSHED AND TALKED...AND FELL IN *LOVE*...

PLEASE, DARLING! LET'S GO OUT INTO THE SARDEN! IT'S ALMOST MIDNIDNT AND I...I'D LIKE TO SE *ALONE* WITH YOU WHEN WE *UNMASK!*

OF COURSE, SWEET! WE'LL FIND A QUIET, LONELY SPOT!

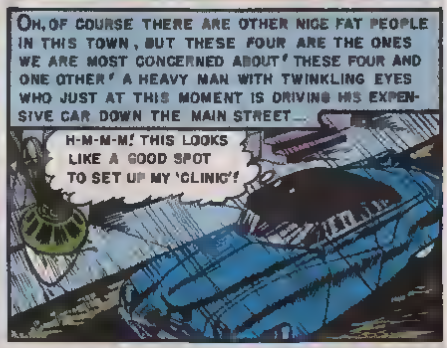
NEAR A MIRROR-LIKE LILY POOL, THEY STOOD...KEN AND THIS LOVELY CREATURE WHOM HE HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH...
I.. I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE, DEAREST! I'LL WANT YOU NO MATTER WHAT!
AND I, YOU, DARLING! IF WE'VE FALLEN IN LOVE IN SPITE OF THESE HORRID MASKS, IT CAN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!
WITH TREMBLING HANDS, KEN UNTIED THE EVIL, UGLY, VAMPIRE MASK FROM THE GIRL AND LIFTED IT AWAY..
OUCH! GOOD LORD!
YES... I'LL WANT YOU... AND THIS IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY...
SHE SPRANG AT HIM ..BURYING HER SHARP FANGS IN HIS NECK! FOR A MOMENT, KEN WAS PARALYZED WITH FEAR! THEN..
GET...AWAY...FROM...ME... GASP...YOU...GASP... HORRIBLE...FIEND...
THEY STRUGGLED! KEN'S FOOT SLIPPED FROM UNDER HIM, AND HE DROPPED TO THE GROUND! SHE WAS UPON HIM...CLAWING...SCRATCHING...TEARING! THE POOL...THE LILY POOL...
MY ONLY CHANCE...
HE PUSHED HER HEAD BELOW THE SURFACE! SHE CLUTCHED AT HIS MASK, TEARING IT FROM HIS FACE! THE WATER WAS CHURNED BY THE GASPING AND STRUGGLING OF THE DROWNING GIRL...
DIE...INHUMAN MONSTER! DIE!
AND THEN THE SPLASHING AND THE CHURNING CEASED! THE VAMPIRE WAS DEAD! THE RIPPLES RAN IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES TO THE EDGE OF THE LILLY POND! KEN GAZED DOWN AT ITS SHIMMERING WATER. AT THE GIRL LYING BELOW ITS MIRROR-LIKE SURFACE! AND THEN HE SAW IT
OH LORD NO— NO!
HIS OWN REFLECTION! HIS FACE UNMASKED...
HEH, HEH! WELL, THAT'S MY TALE, KIDDIES! KEN LOOKED INTO THE LILY-POOL AND DECIDED RIGHT THEN AND THERE TO VISIT A GOOD PLASTIC SURGEON! OH WELL! HE'LL FIND OUT THAT IT'S AN UNDERTAKER HE REALLY NEEDS! AND NOW, I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO MY FELLOW GHOULUNATIC... THE OLD WITCH! BYE, NOW!
AND, IF YOU DON'T HAVE A SUBSCRIPTION YOU'LL FIND OUR ADDRESS SOMEWHERE!

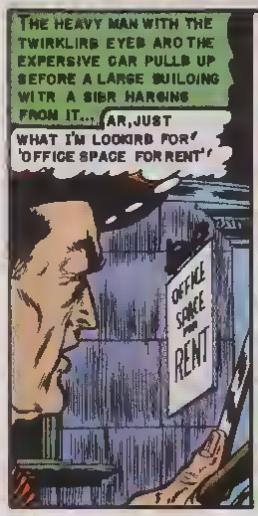
THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

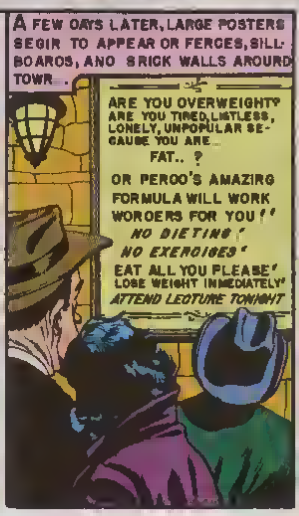

AND THEN THERE'S TOM AIKINS, A HEN-PECKED HUSBAND IF YOU EVER SAW ONE...
LOOK AT YOU! I'M ALWAYS MENDING BUTTONS ON YOUR CLOTHES! THEY KEEP POPPING OFF! I'M ASHAMED TO BE SEEN WITH YOU ON THE STREETS! WHY DON'T YOU GO ON A DIET?
AW, LEENA! YOU KNOW I LIKE MY EATIN' MORE'N ANYTHING IN THE WORLD!

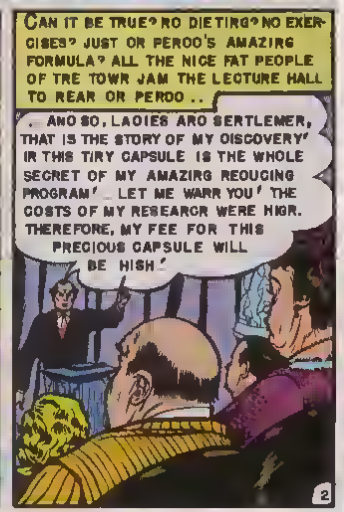
...AND SALLY BATES...EIGHTEEN AND NEVER BEEN KISSED...OR HUGGED...
ANOTHER SATURDAY NIGHT AT HOME! SALLY, HOW DO YOU EXPECT BOYS TO ASK YOU OUT IF YOU REFUSE TO WATCH YOUR FIGURE?
BUT MOTHER! I... I COULDN'T GIVE UP MY ICE-CREAM FRAPPE SUNDAES WITH WHIPPED CREAM! I LOVE THEM SO!

...AND POOR CHARLIE STREET...TWO-HUNDRED AND FORTY POUNDS OF BACHELOR...LIVING IN A FURNISHED ROOM...
NEVER GOES OUT WITH ALL THE NICE WOMEN BOARDIN' WITH ME! THEY WON'T LOOK AT HIM 'CAUSE HE'S SO...SO...YOU KNOW!


OH, OF COURSE THERE ARE OTHER NICE FAT PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN, BUT THESE FOUR ARE THE ONES WE ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT! THESE FOUR AND ONE OTHER! A HEAVY MAN WITH TWINKLING EYES WHO JUST AT THIS MOMENT IS DRIVING HIS EXPENSIVE CAR DOWN THE MAIN STREET...
H-M-M-M! THIS LOOKS LIKE A GOOD SPOT TO SET UP MY 'CLINIC'!


THE HEAVY MAN WITH THE TWINKLING EYES AND THE EXPENSIVE CAR PULLS UP BEFORE A LARGE BUILDING WITH A SIGN HANGING FROM IT...
AH, JUST WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR! 'OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT'!
OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

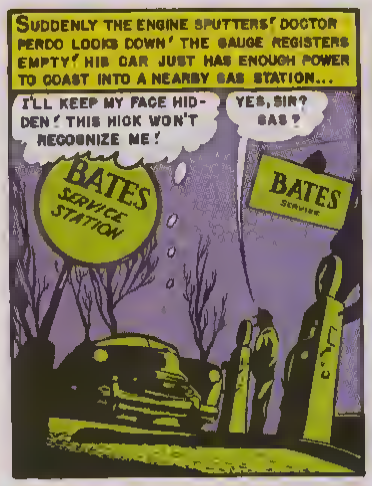

A FEW DAYS LATER, LARGE POSTERS BEGIN TO APPEAR ON FENCES, BILLBOARDS, AND BRICK WALLS AROUND TOWN...
ARE YOU OVERWEIGHT? ARE YOU TIRED, LISTLESS, LONELY, UNPOPULAR BECAUSE YOU ARE... FAT..?
OR PERDO'S AMAZING FORMULA WILL WORK WONDERS FOR YOU!
NO DIETING!
NO EXERCISES!
EAT ALL YOU PLEASE! LOSE WEIGHT IMMEDIATELY!
ATTEND LECTURE TONIGHT

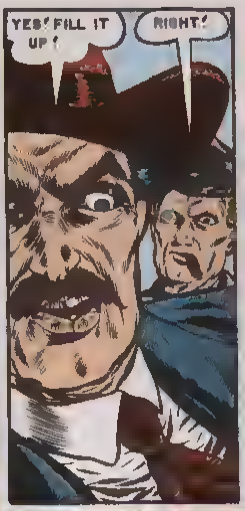

CAN IT BE TRUE? NO DIETING? NO EXERCISES? JUST OR PERDO'S AMAZING FORMULA? ALL THE NICE FAT PEOPLE OF THE TOWN JAM THE LECTURE HALL TO HEAR OR PERDO..
..AND SO, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THAT IS THE STORY OF MY DISCOVERY! IN THIS TINY CAPSULE IS THE WHOLE SECRET OF MY AMAZING REDUCING PROGRAM! LET ME WARN YOU! THE COSTS OF MY RESEARCH WERE HIGH. THEREFORE, MY FEE FOR THIS PRECIOUS CAPSULE WILL BE HIGH!
2

MRS. VAN KLEGE IS FIRST IN LINE THE NEXT MORNING WHEN DR. PERDO OPENS THE DOOR TO HIS 'CLINIC'! BEHIND HER ARE TOM AIKINS, SALLY BATES, AND CHARLIE STREET...
COME IN! COME IN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
YES, THE FEE IS HIGH! TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR ONE LITTLE CAPSULE! BUT, IF IT IS ALL THAT DOCTOR PERDO CLAIMS IT TO BE, IT'LL BE WORTH IT!
AND IN TWO WEEKS, IF YOU HAVE ALL NOT BEGUN TO LOSE *POUNDS* AND *POUNDS*, I GUARANTEE A *FULL REFUND* TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!
ONLY OLD DOC DOUGHERTY, THE TOWN DOCTOR, IS DUBIOUS OF THE STRANGER'S WONDERFUL CAPSULE...
IT IS *IMPOSSIBLE* THAT THIS CAPSULE WILL DO ALL DR. PERDO CLAIMS IT WILL, MR. AIKIN! NOW, IF YOU WANT TO REDUCE, I CAN PRESCRIBE A DIET WHICH...
BUT DOC DOUGHERTY IS IGNORED! THE FOUR NICE FAT PEOPLE EACH TAKE ONE OF DOCTOR PERDO'S CAPSULES...
HERE GOES, MOTHER!
THAT'S A GOOD GIRL, SALLY!
IN A FEW WEEKS, THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE PAID DR. PERDO HIS FABULOUS FEE BEGIN TO LOSE WEIGHT...
JUST LOOK AT MR. STREET! HE LOOKS TWENTY POUNDS SLIMMER ALREADY!
AND IN A MONTH, THE NICE FAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE TAKEN DR. PERDO'S CAPSULES ARE NICE SLIM PEOPLE...
CAN I TAKE YOU TO THE SOPHMORE DANCE SATURDAY NIGHT, SALLY?
I'D *LOVE* TO GO, IRVING!
SO THAT WHEN DOCTOR PERDO CLOSES HIS 'CLINIC' AND BIDS GOOD-BYE TO THE NICE SMALL TOWN, THERE ARE FOUR GRATEFUL THIN PEOPLE TO SEE HIM OFF...
GOOD-BYE, DOCTOR PERDO!
THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, DOC!
GOOD-BYE! DOCTOR! I'LL *NEVER* FORGET YOU FOR THIS!

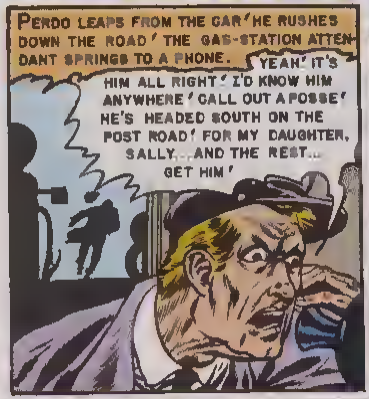
BUT A FEW WEEKS AFTER DR. PERDO HAS GONE, THE NICE THIN PEOPLE WHO TOOK HIS AMAZING CAPSULE HAVE BECOME THINNER PEOPLE...
SALLY! YOU MUST EAT MORE! YOU'RE GETTING SKINNY AS A RAIL!
I EAT ALL I CAN, MOTHER! I... I'M FRIGHTENED!
...AND STILL THINNER...
REALLY, MRS. VAN KLEGE! THIS IS GETTING RIDICULOUS! I'VE TAKEN IN THIS DRESS THREE TIMES ALREADY!
I...CAN'T HELP IT, PIERRE! I CAN'T SEEM TO STOP!
...UNTIL...
WHY DON'T YOU GO SEE OLD DOC DOUGHERTY, TOM? HE'LL TELL YOU WHY YOU'RE DOWN TO NINETY POUNDS!
I CAN'T, LEENA! HE WARNED ME! I'D BE... EMBARRASSED.
THEN, ONE DAY...
COME QUICK, DOCTOR! IT'S MY ROOMER, CHARLIE STREET! HE'S DYING!
BUT WHEN OLD DOC DOUGHERTY ARRIVES...
YOU'RE TOO LATE, DOCTOR! HE...HE'S DEAD!
GOOD HEAVENS! HE'S ALL EMACIATED! THIN AS A BONE! HE LOOKS LIKE HE STARVED TO DEATH!
HE AIN'T GOT NO FAMILY, DOCTOR!
I'LL CALL THE CITY MORGUE! I HAVE TO PERFORM AN AUTOPSY TO DETERMINE THE CAUSE OF DEATH!
AT THE MORGUE, DOC DOUGHERTY TAKES A SCALPEL AND...
GOOD LORD!
4

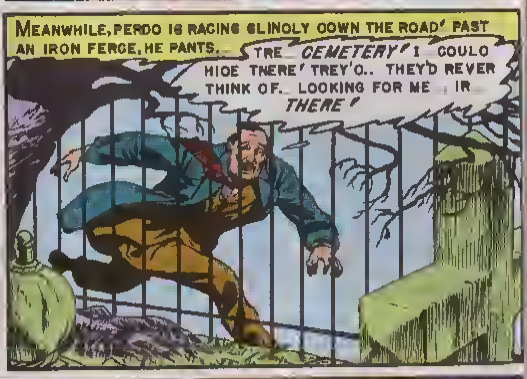
STRAIGHT TO MRS VAN KLEGE'S PALATIAL HOME, THE OLD DOG HURRIES' YHERE ISN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE
MRS VAN KLEGE' I MUST SEE HER
MRS VAN KLEGE IS DEAD'
THE OOCTOR ARRIVES AT SALLY BATES' HOUSE JUSY AS SALLY PASSES INTO THE BEYONO' TOM AIKIN IS OEATHLY ILL WHEN OOG OOUGHERTY ARRIVES' HE AOMINISTERS ORUGS BUT
I'M TOO LATE' I CAN'T SAVE HIM, NOW'
SOB, SOB MY POOR TOM' HE, SOB, JUSY... JUST WASTEO AWAY'
THEN THE OOG RUSHES TO JUDGE FARLAND'S HOUSE...
WHAT'S WRONG, OOG? YOU RE WHITE AS A GHOST'
YOU'VE GOT TO SWEAR OUT A WARRANT FOR THIS INHUMAN OOC-TOR PEROO' HE HE'S MUROEREO FOUR PEOPLE'
THE WARRANT IS SWORN ANO THE SEARGH FOR PEROO BEGINS...
I YHINK IT WOULD BE WISE IF THE INFORMATION AS TO THE CAUSES OF OEATH BE WITHHELD FROM THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS'
YES' THAT WOULO BE AOVISABLE UNOER THE CIRCUMSTANCES'
WEEKS GO BY, BUT THE TREACHER-OUS OOCTOR IS NOT FOUND
I SIGNED THE OEATH CERTIFICATE WITHOUT AUTOPSY ON MRS VAN KLEGE SINCE I KNEW WHAT I WOULD FINO, ANYWAY'
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, OOG'
THE WEEKS STRETCH INTO MONTHS, BUY OOCTOR PEROO ELUOES HIS PURSUERS' THEN, ONE OAY ABOUT SIX MONTHS AFTER HIS FOUR VICTIMS HAO OIEO. OOCTOR PEROO, SPORTING A MOUSTAGHE AS A OISGUISE, IS ORIVING ALONG A COUNTRY ROAD
HMMM' I'O BETTER TAKE A OETOUR' I MIGHT BE RECOGNIZED'
WELCOME TO CRIMESENO
THEY SAY A CRIMINAL ALWAYS RETURNS TO THE SCENE OF THE GRIME' PEROO SEEMS TO BE NO EXCEPTION' HE TAKES A BACK ROUTE, SKIRTING THE EDGE OF TOWN
UGH' YHE TOWN CEMETERY' LET'S SEE' I SOLO FOUR CAPSULES IN THIS BERG' THAT MEANS I GOT FOUR CUSTOMERS BURIEO BEHINO THAT IRON GATE'
5

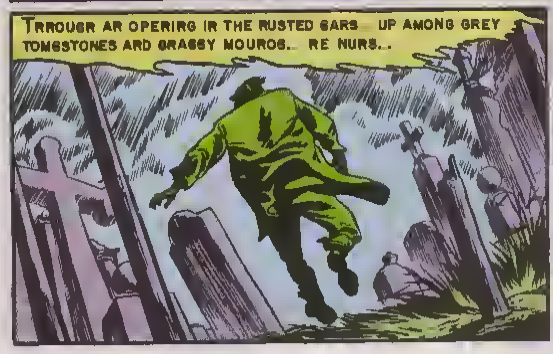

SUDDENLY THE ENGINE SPUTTERS! DOCTOR PERDO LOOKS DOWN! THE GAUGE REGISTERS EMPTY! HIS CAR JUST HAS ENOUGH POWER TO COAST INTO A NEARBY GAS STATION...
I'LL KEEP MY FACE HIDDEN! THIS HICK WON'T RECOGNIZE ME!
YES, SIR? GAS?
BATES SERVICE STATION
BATES SERVICE


YES! FILL IT UP!
RIGHT!

SUDDENLY THE GAS-STATION ATTENDANT TURNS! THAT VOICE HAS A FAMILIAR RING! HE PEERS INTO THE CAR...FLASHLIGHT IN HAND... SHINING FULL INTO THE MURDERING DOCTOR'S FACE...
PERDO! IT'S YOU!!
NO! NO!


PERDO LEAPS FROM THE CAR! HE RUSHES DOWN THE ROAD! THE GAS-STATION ATTENDANT SPRINGS TO A PHONE.
YEAH! IT'S HIM ALL RIGHT! I'D KNOW HIM ANYWHERE! CALL OUT A POSSE! HE'S HEADED SOUTH ON THE POST ROAD! FOR MY DAUGHTER, SALLY...AND THE REST... GET HIM!


MEANWHILE, PERDO IS RACING BLINDLY DOWN THE ROAD! PAST AN IRON FENCE, HE PANTS...
THE CEMETERY! I COULD HIDE THERE! THEY'D... THEY'D NEVER THINK OF... LOOKING FOR ME... IN... THERE!


THROUGH AN OPENING IN THE RUSTED BARS... UP AMONG GREY TOMBSTONES AND GRASSY MOUNDS... RE NURS...

INTO A MAUSOLEUM...
I CAN HIDE IN HERE
VAN KLEGE
PERDO... IN HIS TERROR NEVER NOTICES THE NAME OVER THE DOOR... VAN KLEGE

THE DOOR CLICKS BEHIND HIM! HE STANDS BESIDE A COFFIN REPOSING GROTESQUELY IN THE CENTER OF THE COLD STONE ROOM! SUDDENLY, HE HEARS A NOISE...

A RUSTLING SOUND... COMING FROM THE CASKET!

PERDO UNLATCHES THE CATCH THAT HAS HELD THE CASKET CLOSED FOR SIX MONTHS! HE LIFTS THE LID...

OH, MY... GOD... NO...

OUTSIDE THE MAUSOLEUM, THE POSSE... WITH BLOODHOUNDS HOT ON PERDO'S SCENT... ARE STARTLED BY A BLOOD-CURDLING, EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK...

E-E-E-E-Y-A-A-A-H!

THEY RUSH TO THE STONE VAULT... SWING OPEN THE DOOR...

GOOD LORD!

KILL IT... QUICK!

WHAT IN HEAVEN IS IT?

A HUGE WORM-LIKE MONSTER THRASHES ABOUT IN THE DARK MAUSOLEUM! THEN, THE THRASHING IS STILL. AS COUNTLESS BULLETS PLOW INTO ITS HIDEOUS HULK...

WHERE'S PERDO?

LOOK! HIS SHOE... WITH PART OF A FOOT IN IT! THE THING! IT MUST HAVE... DEVOURED HIM...

THROUGH THE MILLING POSSE, OLD DOC DOUGHERTY AND JUDGE FARLAND PUSH THEIR WAY! THEY GAZE IN HORROR AS THE REVOLTING SIGHT...

WHAT IS IT, DOC?

A TAPEWORM! A MONSTEROUS TAPEWORM! THE ONE THAT KILLED MRS. VAN KLEGE! IT MUST HAVE GROWN AND FED ON HER BODY UNTIL PERDO RELEASED IT FROM THE COFFIN! THEN IT ATTACKED HIM! YOU SEE, THOSE REDUCING CAPSULES HE SOLD EACH CONTAINED A TAPEWORM LARVA! A SURE WAY TO REDUCE!

HEE, HEE! AND THAT'S MY STORY FROM THE CAULDRON FOR THIS TIME, YOU HORROR HUNGRY HOOTS! PERDO GAVE HIS VICTIMS A TAPEWORM TO SWALLOW AND FINALLY ONE SWALLOWED HIM! I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS TASTY TALE! DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR THE FOUR NICE PEOPLE WHO DIED FROM PERDO'S FIENDISH PLOT! IN THE END... THE WORM TURNED... OR HIM! HEE, HEE! OH, BY THE WAY! IF YOU WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT, DON'T GO TO A QUACK LIKE PERDO! JUST KEEP READING E.C. HORROR MAGS! YOU'LL SHIVER THE FAT OFF! BYE, NOW!